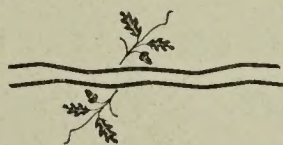


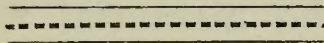
Florence Nickerson.



“Not how much, but how well.”



Florence Nickerson.



“Not how much, but how well.”

PREFACE.

A FRIEND of Miss Nickerson said, regretfully: "If she had died on the land we could put up a stone to mark her grave." Another said: "We may place the memorial where she worked, and that would please her more." So the plan grew to build a house at Lucknow in her name for our Bible women as a tribute to her worth and a memorial of her life and work. To add to the fund for that purpose this little sketch is written.

ISABELLA THOBURN.

Florence Nickerson.

I FIRST saw Florence Nickerson at Columbus, $\frac{1}{6}$ in May of 1880, when she came to offer herself as a missionary candidate at the meeting of the General Executive Committee of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. I remember, as though I had never seen it otherwise, the pale, resolute face, still bearing the impress of the conflict that had taken place within. She loved her friends with an intensity of affection that measured the depth of her suffering in parting from them. One of the committee who saw her then said to me since her death: "She was broken-hearted before she left America." Not that, but she suffered crucifixion on the cross which she had taken up to follow her Lord, and, "risen with him," she walked in the sunshine of His face; and hers was bright

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enough when I saw her again in Lucknow, where she had been a year at home and at work, when I returned in the Autumn of '81. Her letters to her friends at that time show that she was not only cheerful but very happy, and full of hopeful plans for usefulness. She wrote: "For the first few weeks I was home-sick, but that is past, and I am so glad God ever called me to this field of work. Our home is so nice. The presence of the Holy Spirit is felt in every room, and I pray God may so abide in me and so influence every act, that I may be an added blessing to this home."

Miss Gibson, who was her first co-laborer, writes of her: "I remember how we all loved her in the first days of her stay with us, while we were together at conference, and how glad we were when her name was read off for Lucknow. She became an inmate of our home and at once entered into its spirit of loving fellowship. Toward the close of the first year she became 'housekeeper,' and we remember how her dear hands rearranged and

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freshened up our home for the comfort of us all. We had just gotten our work for the year well in hand when my own illness brought from her heart and hands a wealth of loving service and most sisterly care. I believe that, as much as to any one thing, I owe my life to her unwearied labor of love. Later in the year when Henrietta, one of the Lord's 'gathered jewels,' in the last days of her illness was brought from the school to the house to receive more special care, Miss Nickerson left nothing undone to make her last days full of peaceful comfort. So it was given her in that first year not to be ministered unto but to minister. She bravely bore up during that initiating, transplanting period, under hard trials in her work and study, doing earnestly and well what she could."

She had a peculiar fitness for nursing the sick that I heard one who had seen her call a *gift*. The same sisterly hand and heart that Miss Gibson speaks of ministered to me the last few months I spent in the happy Lall Bagh home, and not in

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one thing did her kind thoughtfulness ever fail. But her helping hand reached out not only to sister missionaries and school-girls, but to the poor and needy, by whom we were always surrounded in India, to every one whom the love of Christ had taught her to consider her neighbor.

One day she came in from the zenanas bringing in the carriage with her a poor creature whom she had picked up in passing through the bazar. She was a European woman, young, but worn with dissipation, in soiled, torn clothing and wretchedly ill. Our house was full and Florence took her charge into her own daintily kept room, had her bathed and dressed in her own garments and cared for her in every way until she seemed better and able to be removed to the Home for Homeless Women, then being prepared just across the way. The day after her removal she was attacked with *delirium tremens* and the same gentle hand that had taken hers to support her unsteady steps in the bazar was there the night long to restrain her mad

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ravings. Not only personal service was freely given, but during the following months, while the woman remained at the Home under Miss Blackmar's care, Miss Nickerson's purse paid her board and all necessary expenses.

The same private purse was always open to help both work and workers, not only in subscription books, but in ways known only to the recipients. This was particularly the case at Pithoragarh, where the people were so very poor and where it was difficult to obtain money for the work. Very little of her salary was spent on herself. Much as she liked beautiful things, her own room was kept plainly furnished and the comforts and ornaments she thought she might indulge in were placed in rooms shared in common by the family. Once when I was having a little room done up, in which the girls might see their parents when they came to visit them, she brought pictures, a bookshelf and finally curtains from her own room to make the place attractive.

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So many, many little incidents come to my mind as I write and if our fellow-laborers in India had the privilege they would give numberless instances of her faithfulness in all good works.

The following is from the *Indian Witness*, written by Miss Nickerson's successor in work at Pithoragarh:

A REMINISCENCE OF MISS NICKERSON.

SIR,—One day a man came to the school in Pithoragarh bearing on his back his girl, whom, thinking she was dying, he wished to make over to the school, and so be saved further trouble and expense. A miserable object in human shape it was, but it had a soul and to help and save souls Miss Nickerson had come across the waters. That little diseased one was gathered into loving arms and there held night and day and every remedy tried till she was cured. Two nights the lady sat up with that little thing held in her arms so that she might get rest some way. This little girl had been in the village school and knew and loved Miss Nickerson and begged her father to take her to the Christians, as she wished to be buried there. She lives and is one of God's own little ones, saved through Miss Nickerson's efforts. And how many more are there of whom the same can be said, "Saved through her!" The last great day will show what her life was. Mourning hearts are left, a friend is gone, one more sorrow is added to life's cares for those who

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still toil on and have the battle of life and sin to fight.
But He who is all tender love saw his tired child and gave
her rest. C. GRANT.

Fatehgarh.

Miss Gibson says of her: "I have seldom known
a heart as true to conviction of the right."

Dr. Mendenhall, who was her pastor at Clyde
and who preached the sermon at the memorial serv-
ice held there after the news of her death, said:
"Her leading characteristic was conscientiousness,
and this by nature as well as by grace. Before her
conversion she often wept tears of sorrow over her
condition and secretly cried for help; when
inclined to be gay and worldly she was sobered by
the inward voice. As a Christian her convictions
were profound, her inquiries strong and genuine,
her purposes sincere and noble."

It is very easy in the best service to fill the
hands with mere routine work, and to be all taken
up with the *business* of directing and planning, to
the exclusion of the spiritual life of all, without
which works are dead. Miss Nickerson was

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particularly jealous about this and so desirous that her work in the zenanas be not only a going from house to house to teach or comfort, but that the power of the Spirit bear witness to the Word and the women be truly converted. In a letter to her secretary she wrote: "Please, when you get this, ask special prayer for the zenana-work in Lucknow. So much depends upon the spirituality of the missionary, assistants, and Bible-women, and I feel that we—I—am not *filled* with the Holy Ghost. Without help from above our work must be in vain. I want this to be a most fruitful year." Her joy was unbounded when she believed that one of these women had been born again. Though much interested in the poor village people of the mountains while she worked among them, yet her special care was for the women of the zenanas and her last wish that more missionaries be sent to them.

She was born in Litchfield, Ohio, in 1853, but from 1871 made her home with her sister in Clyde.

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Her education was partly received in Oberlin, and partly at the high-school in Clyde, where she afterwards became a teacher. She was converted at the Lakeside camp-meeting in 1878, and afterwards joined the Methodist Church in Clyde. Again at Lakeside she received a baptism of the Holy Spirit, and a call to mission-work. Of her experience there she said: "Last year I was so afraid of Lakeside, and that God would meet me and trouble me, and I said, unconsciously, perhaps, 'All of self and none of Thee.' He did meet me, O so lovingly. This year I was afraid to come again, lest he might make too great demands upon me, and I said, unconsciously, perhaps, 'Some of self, and some of Thee.' Again, with even greater love, He has met me and so wonderfully that my whole heart cries out, 'None of self, and all of Thee.'"

She once wrote from India what might have been her testimony at any time after her consecration to the service of God:

"My life kept, not for me at all, but for Jesus ;

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not for my safety, but for His glory; not for my comfort, but for His joy; not that I may find rest, but that He may see the travail of His soul and be satisfied; kept to be His witness, that in me may shine forth some tiny sparkle of His light and beauty."

After two years of happy work in Lucknow there came a call for a missionary for Pithoragarh, our most distant mountain station, several days' journey from a European residence. It seemed at first that no one could be spared to go, but Miss Budden was working there alone and was in failing health and had under her care a home for women, a girls' boarding-school and Bible-reading in the villages; her necessity was greater than ours, and Miss Nickerson offered to go to her relief. It was no light thing to one who loved friends and enjoyed social intercourse as she did. A year after Miss Budden left the work for rest and medical treatment and, with Miss Rowe, Florence remained there a second year. Besides the duties of teaching

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and preaching, of relieving suffering and sympathizing with sorrow, they had, in more than usual degree, the care that comes into every missionary's life—that of feeding and clothing the poor. The women of the home were supposed to earn their living from the fields around them and the school girls also helped in planting and weeding, but the harvest was often insufficient. Florence wrote: "My thought has been taxed to the uttermost to devise means to feed and clothe these women and girls. I receive less than fifty dollars a month from the mission and pay nearly half of this to teachers and Bible women and with the rest piece out the food and clothing of nineteen children and twenty women. I sometimes wonder what I am to do, especially since the wheat-crop failure, but hope to get some aid in this country."

Pithoragarh is a high mountain valley and as lovely a spot as any inclosed by the grand Himalayas. The villages nestling among walnut and pomegranate trees and surrounded by terraced

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fields of wheat or rice are very picturesque, but within they are "full of all uncleanness" and life there has its trials, even to those who are engaged in the blessed work of trying to help and save. And so the worker wrote:

"Christ reigneth and will reign, even in Pithoragarh. I have written it and repeated it over and over, but with an awful ache in my heart, partly occasioned by sad news from home and partly by this neglected work."

At the end of her second year there she and Miss Rowe were both appointed to the Plains. The following is her account of a trying experience at this time:

"As my successor could not at once take over the Pithoragarh work it was necessary for me to return for a short time. I left Bareilly January 17th and in company with Miss Knowles started by way of Naini Tal, which we reached late in the evening of Saturday. Sunday morning Pannah, the man who had charge of my pony, sent in for

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medicine, saying he was not very well. The medicine was sent at once and we went to church. When we were returning the matron came running to meet us with the news that Pannah was very ill with cholera. We sent at once for Dr. Humphrey, who came and brought the needed medicines and pronounced the man in a collapse state. He was a Christian and not afraid to die, but who would care for his wife and children? He placed twelve rupees in my hand and said: 'I leave the children to you; care for them.'

"It was thought best, to prevent infection, to send the man to the hospital. Mr. Kirk, always very kind to the people, went with him and cared for him. I was obliged to leave the pony and go on in my dandi. I had a quick, nice journey from Naini Tal to Almora where I was delayed a day getting coolies for my dandi and baggage. I then started and had gone over half-way of the sixty miles to Pithora, when I was startled to meet on the road Pannah's wife, a former husband who had

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deserted her and turned her out of doors before she married Pannah, and, to help him in forcing her along, a government servant. The man had been to Pithora before we left for conference, but we had been assured by officials there that he had no legal claim upon her. By false means he had succeeded in getting a government warrant from Almora and was dragging the woman there in the most shameful manner. When I met them I scarcely knew her; she looked like a wild creature; she had had nothing to eat for a day and a half and the men had even sold a part of her clothing. At first they were not willing to let her speak to me, but after a command and a threat to report their conduct, they stood aside and the poor woman told her story. I did not know what to do. It seemed as though I must go on to Pithora and yet Pannah's last words, 'Care for them,' rang in my ears. I thought, perhaps I could report the case by letter, but when the woman saw that I was preparing to leave her she fell at my feet, pleading

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me not to leave her and crying, 'I know they will kill me.' As she clung to me the man raised his stick to strike her and that decided me, although the going and returning would give me five days' extra travel. I left her in charge of a Christian servant, going a march and a half before dark and the next day, by rising at four o'clock, I arrived in Almora at one P. M. Kind friends there proved themselves friends in need. We telegraphed to know how Pannah was, and heard in reply that he had died the day before. And at the same time came a letter from Pithora to the lady with whom I was stopping, saying, 'If you know where Miss Nickerson is, please tell her to come on as fast as possible. We are in trouble and need her.' I could not stay until the captive woman came, but I left her case in the hands of our kind brother, Rev. H. Coley, of the London Mission and the next day I started again on my long journey. I had gone about five miles when it commenced to rain; then came sleet and then a blinding storm

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of snow. Once the wind was so violent I thought it would be impossible for the men to go further and they did put the dandi down with a groan, saying they could not take another step. A promise of good backsheesh stimulated them to further effort. Only one man, the coolie who carried the provision basket, gave out, fell down and went to sleep. The men tried in vain to make him get up and walk and one of the dandi-bearers took him on his back and brought him to the bungalow (the little traveler's rest house). How glad we were to reach it!

“The next day the sun came out bright and clear, and although the mountain-paths were made more difficult through snow and water, the light of God's countenance never was brighter; his presence, love and care never more precious. During the many days of travel and anxiety—for you will remember I left Bareilly January 17th, and arrived in Pithora January 31st—the 91st Psalm came to me over and over again, with wonderful strength-

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ening power: 'He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. . . . He shall call upon me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.'

"What of Pannah's wife? The case was dropped when the man confessed he did not want the woman, but only wished to make her husband trouble and get money from him. She was allowed to return and is now in the Adeline Newman Home and her three children in the school."

Back in the Lucknow zenanas she spent her fifth year in India. When leaving home she had told her mother, who felt unwilling to let her go, that she would return on a visit at the end of five years, but as the time passed and she saw the needs of the work and how few were the laborers, she felt that she ought to stay. She wrote to her mother: "I want to see you all as much as you want to see me, yet I dare not do a thing that seems in opposition to God's will. I am quite well;

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quite able to remain another year. Several of the ladies must return home because of ill health and for me to return seems wrong. Mother, dear, if you say *stay* . . . I shall feel quite a burden lifted and God will not only bless me and my work, but will abundantly bless you all at home." The answer said *stay* and no home letter ever gave Florence more pleasure, although during any year of her absence she might have written as she did once: "Sometimes my heart grows faint with longing for my very own. This has been a life-long weakness."

It is said sometimes now: "What a mistake that she did not come home a year sooner!" No. She made the choice of loving obedience to what seemed, in the light given, the way of duty. She trusted God and the issue is with Him, "who," as she wrote her friends, "never makes a mistake." He is "blessing abundantly," though now we only see clouds and darkness. If Florence Nickerson had seen the end from the beginning, had been told that after

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six years of heavy responsibility and weary service, her lonely grave would be in the sea, she would not have faltered nor turned back.

During all the following year her health seemed failing and it was plain that she must return, for a time at least, to America. June 18th she wrote: "Since it has been decided that I go home at the end of the year I can scarcely keep my thoughts within bounds. Every night for the last week I have dreamed of home and friends. You may possibly think I do not love India as I should. When I think of my dear 'Caroline mamma' and the other Bible-readers and other friends, I wonder how I can possibly leave India for two years, but at once my mother's face and a host of others come before me, and my heart gives one great bound with the thought that O, I am going home next year! Then come other thoughts of parting that make me almost wish, as —— said, that we were all dead. This leaving India and leaving America is *awful*. Every year I have loved the

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people and the work more. I don't know how I shall ever leave it, even for a short time."

As the hot season advanced she went for a few weeks to the hills, but returned little better and as time passed she was often unable to go out to the zenanas at all. They tell us how she would say, "If I can't work with you, I will at least make the home bright for you when you come back;" and flowers were brought in and arranged on the table and in each one's room and little things looked after about the house that are often neglected in our busy life.

At this time she was superintending repairs on the houses of some of our Bible women and she was very much interested in the work, and often expressed regret that she had not the means to have it better done. To one of these Bible women, Mrs. Caroline Richards, or, as she is called by her friends who owe much to her motherly kindness, "Caroline Mamma," she was much attached and for her especially she wanted a nice house. "I want

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Caroline Mamma to be comfortable," she would often say. This woman's last act when they were leaving India was to slip into Miss Rowe's hand a little gift which was great to her means, to make Miss Nickerson "comfortable" on her journey.

A change of place is often very beneficial in India and in the latter part of September she went for a few weeks to stay with some English friends with whom she had rested before; but she was failing rapidly and had to return to Lucknow for medical treatment. A month later she was removed to Cawnpore and to the perfect quiet at the girls' school during the vacation months. Miss Rowe was her nurse and constant companion. She had been associated with her during four of her six years in India and she loved her most of her Indian friends. Alone in the mountains, they used to entertain one another in the evenings when work was over, reading and singing together and when they came back among us in Lucknow their duets were very sweet, sung in voices that were in

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sympathy as well as in harmony. Miss Rowe tells us how they talked and prayed and sang together at Cawnpore for the last time, the morning when all the other missionaries were at conference in the love-feast, always so blessed to those present. A hymn that in those days she often asked for, sometimes over and over again, we copy entire, because it expresses her last conscious hope and faith and her friends have asked for its publication :

Since thy Father's arms sustain thee,
Peaceful be ;
When a chastening hand restrains thee,
It is He.
Know His love in full completeness
Fills the measure of thy weakness ;
If He wound thy spirit sore,
Trust Him more.
Feareth sometimes that thy Father
Hath forgot ?
When the clouds above thee gather
Doubt Him not.
Ever hath He comfort spoken ;
Never hath His word been broken.
Better hath He been for years
Than thy fears.

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Without murmur, uncomplaining,
Follow on,
Saying, whatsoe'er God doeth
Is well done.
Bear to-day thy cross of sorrow,
Wear thy crown of life to-morrow;
Sing while calmly holding still!
'T is His will.

To His own the Saviour giveth
Daily strength;
To each troubled heart that liveth,
Peace at length.
Therefore, whatsoe'er betideth,
Know His love for thee provideth;
Do not question why or how,
Only bow.

In January after the meeting of the North India Conference a final consultation of physicians was held and it was decided that the only hope for Miss Nickerson's recovery lay in the possible advantage to be derived from the sea-voyage to America and treatment there. She was not able to travel alone and Miss Rowe was selected to accompany her. She bore the long railway journey to Bombay better than was expected, but

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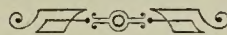
was not so well while waiting there for the steamer. Miss Rowe says:

“The last night of our stay she was very wakeful and delirious. Towards morning she asked for the nurse, whom she seemed to think one of her Sunday-school scholars. She said: ‘I love you; you are a nice little girl. I want you to give your heart to Jesus and do the work I have left in India.’ These were the last coherent words she spoke. We sailed on the 25th of January. From the time we went to sea she daily grew worse and Sunday the doctor said: ‘I am afraid Miss Nickerson is dying.’ From that time she lay in a stupor; we longed for a word or look of recognition, but she gave no sign of consciousness. The months of suffering had drawn lines of weariness and pain on mouth and brow; but Monday evening that look passed away and she lay restfully on the couch in the cabin. It seemed that the Master had seen us ‘toiling in rowing’ and had come over the water and said ‘Peace, be still,’ and there was

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a great calm. I held the little white hand until the feeble pulse ceased beating, and we knew that she was at rest for evermore.

“The worn frame was prepared for burial and very gently the strong sailors carried her to the lower deck. At half-past nine the steamer was stopped and in the solemn stillness the captain read the burial-service. We were in the Gulf of Aden and the moon touched the rippling waters with tender light as we laid her down in sure hope of the resurrection.”



In Memoriam.

BY REV. B. H. BADLEY.

EVEN so, our Father, in our tears we say:
What seemeth good to thee is best for us;
And while we weep, and mourn our heavy loss,
We bow submissively. Thy will be done.

But yesterday we sat and planned. “The sea,”
We said, “will surely bring her health and home.”
And so it has. The blessed land of health,

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Where sickness never comes, is hers to-day,
And she has reached the heavenly home above,
And joined the angelic company *at home*.

'T was here she wrought with faith and hope and love,
At peace with God, upheld and kept by him;
An earnest prayer forever on her lips,
That God would kindly grant her great success
In winning souls. Here, in the darkened homes,
She went a messenger of light to all.
Zenana women are in tears for her,
She loved them so—her strongest argument;
The years to come will show the seed she sowed
Has bloomed and yielded rich and golden fruit.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God;
It doth not yet appear what we shall be.”
Thus often sang this sweet-voiced friend of ours.
And sooner than she dreamed the Lord has come
And called her to himself. She sees his face,
And with a clearer voice and happier song
She hymns his praises in the courts of bliss.

O restless, dark and deep Arabian Sea,
Thou hast no conquest in this tearful hour!
Thou, too, of God's great acre art a part;
From out thy hidden depths, when God shall say,
The dead shall rise, and from thy coral groves
Shall plume their flight for blissful realms above,
And in the blessedness of heaven's delights
God's countless saints shall rest for evermore.

LUCKNOW, INDIA.

